PROTECTING AMERICAN PHYSICAL SECURITY IN THE POST-COLD WAR PERIOD

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The end of the Cold War and major systemic changes over the past two decades in the distribution of power require a re-examination of United States national security strategy. Over its history, the U.S. has pursued strategies based on isolationism, Hemispheric defense, balance of power and collective security, as well as containment of the Soviet Union during the Cold War. This essay assesses which strategy -- or combination of strategies -- will best protect U.S. physical security in the post-Cold War period.

What are U.S. national security interests? From the frameworks presented in the "Foundations" course, I would identify three over-arching interests: (1) physical security, i.e. protection of the population and the territorial and environmental[1] integrity of the nation; (2) economic welfare and prosperity; and (3) value preservation (at home) and projection (abroad). I subsume Neuchterlein's "favorable world order" interest under these three.

[1] I use this term broadly to encompass the whole physical environment, not just ecology or natural resources management.

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In practice, of course, it is difficult to neatly separate these basic national interests. For example, maintenance of a conducive environment requires a certain level of economic well-being. Likewise, our values as a nation and the extent to which we project a positive face depend on self-confidence that comes from economic prosperity and physical safety. Nevertheless, I will try to limit my assessment to interests which relate directly to physical security.

Isolationism was the earliest strategy pursued by the United States to protect its security. Americans have traditionally rejected "entangling alliances" with other powers. With a vast continent to conquer, an ocean separating us from Europe, a strong notion that the New World was different from the Old, and very few instruments of national power, this strategy was reflective of the challenges and threats our nation faced in its first century. Despite major changes in U.S. potential power by the late 1800s, large internal markets, continuing insularity, and the persistent repulsion with European *realpolitik* meant that isolationism remained a powerful force. This was reflected in the rejection of U.S. participation in the League of Nations.

At the same time, as early as the enunciation of the Monroe Doctrine the United States did not remove itself entirely from the world. The notion of protecting our own physical security through Hemispheric defense has also been a consistent theme in U.S. strategies. This idea was based on the belief that our interests were best served by eliminating further European colonial competition in the Western Hemisphere, thereby precluding direct

designs on U.S. territory. Initially this was a rather presumptuous policy, given actual U.S. power. But American victory over Spain in 1898, the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, and the construction of the Panama Canal showed that we increasingly had the resources to carry out a strategy of Hemispheric defense. And that we had extended our notion of physical security to include the Caribbean and Central America. The Hemispheric theme has continued to figure prominently in U.S. strategies.

The reality of U.S. power, increasing commercial interests, improvements in transportation and communication, and the resulting expansion of overseas travel by Americans gradually changed our view of the physical interests our strategies had to protect. The Theodore Roosevelt presidency saw the first major involvement in international balance of power politics in the Far East with efforts to balance European colonial ambitions in China and maintain an Open Door to trade, as well as U.S. mediation between Japan and Russia. As noted, however, American public sentiment still ran against such involvement, and the events leading up to World War I showed strong reluctance to play a balancing role in European conflicts. Only when German U-boats appeared able to threaten U.S. lives and territorial integrity did we enter the war, and then only as an "Associated Power" on the lesser of two evil sides. Basing U.S. strategy on the balance of power also ran counter to the idealistic undercurrent of American foreign policy, as was demonstrated by the widespread reaction to the embrace of this approach in the Nixon-Kissinger years.

While our strategies of Hemispheric defense included some of its features, collective security has only become an important element of U.S. policies since the 1940s. Wilson's earlier attempt to involve the country in the League of Nations failed, and only with the advent of the United Nations and the series of Cold War-inspired regional alliances did this approach finally find acceptance. Nevertheless, Americans have continued to be extremely hesitant to sacrifice U.S. freedom of action to provisions requiring us to take prescribed actions in the defense of others. In the post-World War II world, this attitude is reflective of the great preponderance of U.S. power relative to its allies and the desire to keep our options open in determining in each situation whether our physical security is threatened.

To what extent can we draw on these experiences to inform our view of an appropriate approach to protect our physical security in the post-Cold War period? Context is extremely important in this regard. The United States has undertaken a variety of vastly different strategies over its history, in response to an equal variety of conditions that it has faced. Important determinants of context include the nature of the threats to physical security, potential and actual power (both in absolute terms and relative to other states), perceptions of the resources available, and public attitudes about the world and the U.S. role in it. While the demise of US-USSR bipolarity may create some similarities between pre-1939 Europe and our immediate future, the world in many respects is fundamentally changed by the last 45 years, especially with respect to American power, public opinion, and the ability of

other nations (and individuals) directly to threaten our territorial integrity and the physical security of Americans throughout the world. In addition, I would submit that Americans will continue -- I think accurately -- to perceive their country as different from the traditional European powers, thus limiting the applicability of these lessons as a guide to U.S. strategies in the immediate future. As a result, I believe the post-Cold War world will in most respects look very different from the American vantage point than any previous period.

In the 1990s and beyond, military power and the ability of one country to force its will on another will remain important, but decreasingly so. Instead, what Joseph Nye has called "soft power" -- economic influence, the ability to set the agenda, an attractive culture -- will become more influential. Polarity will depend on the dimension of power. For example, military power will likely continue to be bipolar, quite conceivably unipolar if the Soviet Union self-destructs. However, economic power will be multipolar, with the European Community, Japan and the United States occupying roughly equivalent positions. Overall, the U.S. will maintain its leadership position as the country with the greatest and most diverse power, and also as the standard-bearer of the world's prevailing political and economic philosophies. Transnational and non-state actors and a range of non-traditional issues such as energy, population growth, and ecology will command increasingly larger attention. Communications technologies will continue to shrink the world, meaning that events in any part of the globe will affect the physical environment in which Americans live.

While immediate direct threats to U.S. territorial integrity seem remote, I see four major threats to American security in the period ahead:

* Anarchy in Europe or Asia brought about by the breakdown of the Cold War order and hypernationalism, creating the conditions for the rise of a hostile, hegemonic power;
* Instability anywhere in the world that would threaten U.S. investments or citizens;
* Third World conditions, particularly in Latin America, that would lead to massive immigration pressures or environmental damage; and
* Continued or expanded international terrorism.

These assumptions about the post-Cold War world and threats to U.S. physical security argue strongly for a combination of all four strategies, with primary emphasis on collective security. The U.S. would continue to provide a nuclear umbrella against possible threats from the Soviet Union or others, and the mutual assistance guaranties implicit in collective security arrangements would provide the framework within which all nations would feel secure to work out in a peaceful manner the conflicts that will inevitably arise. More importantly, perhaps, such a strategy would tie the United States into relationships that will allow us to continue to shape events and help resist tendencies to isolate ourselves.

In Europe, American support will be critical to the success of efforts to bring Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union (as one nation or several) into the economic and political integration process. This would create a forum for addressing ethnic differences,

providing economic assistance to the former communist countries, addressing Russia's legitimate security concerns, and limiting the opportunities for a united Germany to get out of bounds. Likewise, our policy toward Japan should be aimed at providing vehicles for internationalizing Japanese culture and domestic policies, encouraging Japan to pay a larger economic share for worldwide development and peace, and providing a sufficient sense of security to the Japanese to guard against pressures to re-militarize. Finally, the United Nations should be seen as the principal forum for solving Third World disputes as the rationale for superpower polarization of these conflicts disappears.

Elements of other strategies, however, will continue to be important. The United States must remain sensitive to regional balances of power (e.g. in the Persian Gulf region). However, emphasis should be not on building up weaker states, but on coordinated action to avoid inordinant strengthening of any state and on integrating all regional contenders into organizations that might gain their inspiration from the European Community.

At the same time, while we must guard against tendencies to split the world into three competing blocks -- Europe, East Asia, and the Americas -- the U.S. will continue to have a particular interest in events in the Western Hemisphere. Our policy would not be Hemispheric <u>defense</u> in the traditional sense of protecting the region against outside aggression. Rather, there should be a shift to an emphasis on satisfying local needs and nurturing democracy. American interest in the region will stem from the problems that vast disparities in income within and among countries can create.

Finally, a degree of introspection is also called for to protect our physical security. The country must address its internal divisions and insecurities, bridge the increasing gap between rich and poor, improve our ability to compete economically and technologically, rebuild a consensus on an activist foreign policy, and educate the American public about the new world realities and the interests we have in participating constructively in that world. Without a strong domestic underpinning and willingness openly to meet the challenges the future will bring, our influence over that future and our own security will be steadily weakened.

What does such a strategy imply about the use of the instruments of national power? Military power will remain important, but with major restructuring. Reminiscent of George Kennan's views during his National War College days, American military forces could be structured as highly mobile, quick-response expeditionary and anti-terrorist forces. In this regard, the outcome of the current Persian Gulf operations will be critical to demonstrate the efficacy of this approach and build confidence in its broader application. Finally, we must exercise great restraint on arms proliferation through military sales, and use our influence with other potential arms exporters to this end.

This strategy would entail a major role for diplomacy, American participation in and support of international organizations, and information and cultural exchanges. Covert action would be de-emphasized but should remain in the quiver, primarily for information gathering purposes.

In the economic realm, we should continue to champion interdependence based on free trade. We should be especially sensitive to trade opportunities that allow Third World countries to grow economically. Economic assistance would have a prominent role, but as a more clearly focussed partnership with developing countries. We must remove confusion about motives in providing aid that are often counterproductive, and insist, in exchange for our assistance, on policy changes that will improve the welfare of the majority of people in recipient countries.